

# The Shadow of the Italian Colonial Experience: The Impact of Collective Emotions on Intentions to Help the Victims' Descendants

Silvia Mari, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
 Luca Andrighetto, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
 Alessandro Gabbiadini, QUA\_SI Project, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
 Federica Durante, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
 Chiara Volpato, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy

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Laurent Licata

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# The Shadow of the Italian Colonial Experience: The Impact of Collective Emotions on Intentions to Help the Victims' Descendants

Silvia Mari, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
Luca Andrighetto, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
Alessandro Gabbiadini, QUA\_SI Project, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
Federica Durante, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy  
Chiara Volpato, Department of Psychology, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy

Recalling the Italian colonial experience elicits the collective emotions of guilt, shame, and ingroup-focused anger. We expected that these emotions would predict different reparation intentions in favor of the colonized populations' descendants. Students and non-students were recruited ( $N = 152$ ) and asked to rate their emotions of collective guilt, shame, and anger for the violence that their ingroup had perpetrated against colonized people. Results showed that shame affected intentions to provide economic compensation to current inhabitants of the ex-colonies. This relationship was mediated by concerns of damage for the ingroup's image. Anger toward the ingroup predicted intentions to help immigrants from the ex-colonies now living in Italy. Interestingly, empathy toward the outgroup mediated the latter relation. Finally, collective guilt was not reliably associated with any reparation strategy. These findings have implications for theory and for the historical collective memory of Italian colonialism.

## 1. Italian Colonialism

The colonization of Africa by European nations reached its peak in the second half of the nineteenth century, the period of the partitioning of Africa. Italy played a largely marginal role. Its colonial experience began quite late and was very brief. Italy was the last European country to establish a colonial empire, and it was comparatively limited in time (sixty years from the end of the nineteenth century until World War II), and space (in the African territories that are now Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea). The expansionist designs of the Italian government looked to East Africa where colonialization seemed easier than elsewhere because explorers and missionaries created an opening and competition with other countries was less fierce here (see Labanca 2007). According to Labanca (2007), Italian colonialism was a “demographic imperialism” whose main goal was to find an outlet for an excess workforce. Before the Fascist era, Italian colonialism revolved around the “white man’s burden” ideology, which rested on the idea of a cultural—rather than biological—European superiority that was thus conceived as relative and modifiable. However, especially after the Ethiopian invasion, the Fascist régime adopted a blatant racist policy (with the first racial legislation passed

in 1937), ending inter-racial tolerance and establishing racial separation. In that context, Italians perceived native people as competitors for the resources of the African territory.

Unsurprisingly, the Italian colonizers resorted to violence. The means used by the régime to occupy Libya and the Horn of Africa, to “pacify” the occupied regions, and to establish a hierarchy between the colonizers and the colonized people were violence and oppression. Racist ideologies and a sense of superiority that deeply penetrated Italian consciousness sustained such behavior (Labanca 2004). On many occasions Italians acted brutally and murderously. For instance, during the assaults on Abyssinia, Libya, and Ethiopia (Del Boca 1976–1984, 1986–1988) soldiers and civilians were slaughtered, poison gas was used (Del Boca 1996), martial law was declared (Del Boca 2005), and people were rounded up in concentration camps (Del Boca 1992; Rochat 1991). Despite the lack of documentation (Labanca 2004), historians estimate one hundred thousand victims of the conquest and re-conquest of Libya between 1911 and 1932 and four hundred thousand deaths in Ethiopia and Eritrea between 1887 and 1941 (Labanca 2007). According to Rochat (1991), around fifty thousand people died between 1927 and

1931 during the repression of the resistance in Cyrenaica and one hundred thousand civilians were deported from the Gebel plateau to prison camps where many of them perished.

Historical documents in the Italian state archives, only recently released after decades of censorship, confirm the occurrence of “massacres and outrages, oppression and plunder, deportations and all kind of violence” (Del Boca 1992, 113). The terms “slaughter” and “genocide” are now often used when describing Italian colonialism (Dawi 1991; Labanca 2004; Salerno 2005).

Despite recent developments in the historical reconstruction of Italian colonialism, several gaps still remain, due to the fragmentary nature of the information and the lack of witnesses’ accounts. It is worth noting that there has been a general delay in historical inquiry into colonial matters, and that investigation has been subject to censorship, control, and a political tendency not to come to terms with the past (Labanca 2004; Volpato 2009). This political stance was driven mainly by the will, still present today, to spread a positive image of Italian colonialism. Specifically, the reconstruction of Italian collective identity following defeat in World War II and the stain of the alliance with the Nazis was based on the self-absolving myth of *Italiani brava gente* (“Italians good people”), which hampered the process of acknowledging the horrific acts that had been committed by highlighting an image of Italians as humane colonizers (Andrighetto et al. forthcoming; Del Boca 2005; Volpato 2009; Volpato and Cantone 2005; Volpato, Durante, and Cantone 2007). Only recently has the obstinate and persistent propensity to repress colonial issues that characterized the postwar sociopolitical landscape been called into question. In 1997 the Italian government, following the example of other colonizing nations, apologized to the Ethiopian president and, more recently, returned the Obelisk of Axum stolen from Ethiopia in 1935. Moreover, in 2009, the Italian prime minister apologized to Libya and granted financial aid.

However, with these few exceptions, the Italian colonial experience has been long neglected by both the scientific community and political and civil society. Socio-psychological research has not so far investigated Italian colonial-

ism either: the present work intends to fill this gap. The integration of psychosocial findings with the results of historical research has been strongly advocated (e.g. Gergen and Gergen 1984; Graumann and Gergen 1996; McGuire 1994), and historical-social research has indeed encouraged interesting new insights into social psychology (Brown et al. 2008; Doosje et al. 1998).

The present study set out to explore Italians’ perceptions of their ingroup’s colonial experience and of the violence perpetrated in the colonies. We were particularly interested in the emotional reactions aroused by these events. Specifically, we hypothesized that collective emotions of guilt, shame, and ingroup-focused anger could have important but distinct effects on behavioral intentions to help the victims’ descendants. To our knowledge, no previous studies have examined the simultaneous impact of these three emotions in relation to historical ingroup wrongdoings.

## 2. Collective Emotions and Behavioral Implications

Intergroup emotion theory (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000; Mackie, Silver, and Smith 2004; Smith 1993) proposes that individuals experience emotions about their ingroup and its behaviors that are clearly distinguished from those they feel about the self and personal behaviors (Smith 1993). Indeed, individuals may experience collective emotions relating to an event simply through acknowledging their group membership, even if they are not personally involved in the collective event or if the event belongs to their ingroup history (Smith 1993; see also Doosje et al. 1998; Steele 1990). Ever since the early explorative studies brought this topic to light, the attention of social psychologists has been drawn by the great impact of these emotions on intra- and inter-group relationships. Indeed, these emotions seem to engender specific affective states that motivate individuals to take pro-social action toward the ingroup or outgroups involved in the event (for reviews, see Iyer and Leach 2008; Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor 2009). Like self-conscious emotions, the social actions that individuals are willing to undertake depend strongly on the nature of the experienced emotion (Frijda 1986; Tiedens and Leach 2004).

Over the past decades, researchers have explored how people face and emotionally react to events in which the

ingroup is perceived to have mistreated or exploited other groups (for reviews see Branscombe and Doosje 2004; Iyer and Leach 2008). Particular studies investigated how people conceptualized events related to the Holocaust (Michman 2002; Wohl and Branscombe 2004, 2005; Zebel, Doosje, and Spears 2009), ongoing conflicts (Iyer, Schmader, and Lickel 2007; Roccas, Klar, and Liviatan 2006) or recent ones (Brown and Čehajić 2008), the exploitation of indigenous populations (Augoustinos and LeCouteur 2004; Brown et al. 2008; Sibley et al. 2008), and the colonial past (Doosje et al. 1998; Klein and Licata 2003; Licata and Klein 2005).

Collective guilt and collective shame are the most widely investigated emotional responses to such events. They share many features: Firstly, both arise from the perception that the ingroup is responsible for an action that overstepped moral limits. Secondly, both collective guilt and collective shame are negative emotional states that motivate individuals to alleviate them. Nevertheless, studies focusing on self-conscious emotions (Baumeister, Stillwell and Heather-ton 1994; Lewis 1971; Tangney and Fischer 1995) reveal that shame and guilt lead to different motivational states and often lead to different goals and intentions. Recent literature confirms this distinction in the intergroup domain, showing how collective shame and collective guilt are often linked to different social actions (Brown and Čehajić 2008; Brown et al. 2008; Iyer et al. 2007), although sometimes they show high levels of correlation (Brown et al. 2008), or are even considered synonymous (Iyer, Leach, and Crosby 2003; Leach, Iyer, and Pederson 2006). Recent studies (Leach et al. 2006; Leach, Iyer and Pederson 2007) also reveal a third powerful predictor of social actions in response to ingroup wrongdoings: ingroup-focused anger.

### 2.1. Collective Guilt

Collective guilt arises from the evaluation that one's group has behaved inconsistently with the norms and values it endorses (Branscombe and Doosje 2004; Doosje et al. 1998). Individuals may experience guilt in relation to historical ingroup transgressions (Doosje et al. 1998; Wohl and Branscombe 2004, 2005; Zebel et al. 2009) or present-day ones (Brown et al. 2008; Roccas et al. 2006), as well as in relation to an ingroup's illegitimate socioeconomic advantages over an outgroup (Leach et al. 2006; Leach et al. 2007).

The literature confirms that collective guilt is a “pro-social emotion,” since it tends to focus on negative consequences and on the victims of ingroup wrongdoings. Thus, it has been shown that the feeling of guilt motivates individuals to act to compensate the sufferings inflicted on members of the victimized outgroup. In their pioneering socio-psychological work exploring guilt in relation to colonialism, Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998) found that the sense of guilt Dutch people felt in relation to the violence committed in Indonesian colonies induced them to support general national aid campaigns in favor of the victimized populations. Subsequently, evidence confirmed that collective guilt is related to various pro-social attitudes and behaviors, such as support for official government apologies for historical mistreatment (McGarty et al. 2005), desire for positive contact with the victims, willingness to enact strategies to reduce social exclusion (Brown et al. 2008), and decreasing prejudice (Iyer et al. 2003).

The evidence outlined above coherently supports the idea that collective guilt encourages individuals to act pro-socially. This inclination could plausibly be driven by an increase in awareness that the members of an outgroup suffered dramatically because of the ingroup's actions. This hypothesis is supported by Brown and Čehajić (2008), who report that empathy is an important mediator in explaining the effects of collective guilt on reparation strategies. In particular, they find that the relationship between guilt and compensatory strategies is explained by the level of empathy respondents feel toward the outgroup.

Thus, collective guilt leads to positive outcomes and helps to restore harmonious intergroup relations. Nevertheless, its passive and self-reflective nature (Frjida 1986; Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994) makes it a “low action potential” emotion. For this reason, its effects on reparation strategies tend to disappear when there are other more intense and “action-oriented” emotions simultaneously influencing the individual (Leach et al. 2006; for reviews see Thomas et al. 2009).

### 2.2. Collective Shame

Like guilt and, as we will see below, ingroup-focused anger, collective shame stems from a belief that the ingroup is

responsible for illegitimate and harmful actions (Iyer et al. 2007; Brown and Čehajić 2008; Brown et al. 2008). But shame focuses mainly on the negative consequences of these actions for the ingroup's image (Branscombe, Slugoski, and Kappen 2004; Lewis 1971; Lickel, Schmader, and Barquissau 2004; Tangney et al. 1996). Collective shame involves the concern that reprehensible actions may harm the ingroup's public image in such a way that the ingroup may be perceived as incompetent, weak, or even disgusting (Branscombe et al. 2004; Lickel et al. 2004). In other words, this intensely anxious feeling is related to the worry that others might consider the group ridiculous or inferior, and reject or exclude it. Consequently, collective shame is associated with immediate emotional responses aiming to defend the ingroup's image, rather than with more constructive and reflective pro-social reactions (Tangney et al. 1996).

On an individual level, several studies find a significant positive relation between shame and self-defensive responses (Lickel et al. 2005; Roseman et al. 1994; Tangney et al. 1996). A small number of studies also confirm this relationship in the intergroup domain, showing that collective shame strongly motivates individuals to minimize, cover up, and keep a distance from the consequences of their ingroup's wrongdoing, or to avoid any direct contact with victims (Gausel et al. 2009; Iyer et al. 2007; Lickel et al. 2005). However, other studies find a moderate link between shame and pro-social responses, both on an individual level (Roseman et al. 1994; Schmader and Lickel 2006; Tangney et al. 1996) and at the group level (Brown and Čehajić 2008; Brown et al. 2008; Gausel et al. 2009; Iyer et al. 2003). This is hardly surprising, since altruistic and supportive behavior toward the victims of the ingroup's misdeeds might offer an effective way to restore the ingroup's image *in the eyes of others*. However, the effects of collective shame on these strategies are weaker and more temporary than those of guilt (Brown et al. 2008). The mediators ruling these relationships also seem to be different. For example, Brown and Čehajić (2008) find that the effects of shame on reparation strategies are to be explained as an attempt at managing the ingroup's reputation by considering the ingroup as the real victim of the situation.

### 2.3. Ingroup-Focused Anger

Anger is usually understood as an intensely negative feeling which predisposes people "to attack" (Lazarus 1991) an individual (Frjida 1986) or a group (Montada and Schneider 1989) responsible for a provocation. Leach and colleagues (2006; but see also Leach et al. 2007; Iyer et al. 2007) conceptualize a different form of anger that can be felt toward the ingroup. Like collective guilt and collective shame, ingroup-focused anger arises when people perceive that their group is perpetrating unfair or violent behavior toward an outgroup. Ingroup-focused anger also implies that the ingroup is acknowledged as fully responsible for harmful or illegitimate actions. Individuals are therefore motivated to repair the situation by providing compensation to the victims.

Whereas guilt is the outcome of a deep and conscious thought process, anger is elicited as soon as the stimulus becomes salient, and creates a high level of arousal: it provokes an intense negative state characterized by a pervasive sense of agitation and anxiety (Roseman et al. 1994). This drives individuals to urgently and actively face the situation in order to alleviate this state, both on an individual (Frjida 1986) and collective level (Montada and Schneider 1989). Given its high action potential, if self-focused anger were to arise together with collective guilt, anger—and not guilt—should increase intentions to provide compensation (Leach et al. 2006; Iyer et al. 2007). Self-focused anger seems to be more effective than guilt as a predictor when it comes to specific political reparation strategies, such as donating money or organizing events (Leach et al. 2006). However, the few studies investigating the effects of collective guilt and ingroup-focused anger refer only to present-day injustices and harmful actions (Leach et al. 2006; Iyer et al. 2007).

### 3. Collective Emotions and Historical Wrongdoing

The main aim of the present research was to test the distinct effects of collective guilt, collective shame, and ingroup-focused anger aroused by the evocation of Italian colonialism on intentions to pursue different reparation strategies. We first examined whether a generally negative evaluation of colonialism and acknowledgment of the violence and harm caused by Italian colonizers could effectively trigger the three collective emotions. We hy-



pothesized that a positive appraisal of colonialism and a reluctance to acknowledge the ingroup's violence would negatively predict feelings of guilt, shame, and ingroup-focused anger. Subsequently we investigated the relationship between the aforementioned collective emotions and reparation strategies.

Thus far, the study by Iyer and colleagues (2007) is the only research to explore the effects of these three emotions simultaneously, in relation to political strategies opposing the Iraq War of 2003. The authors found that ingroup-focused anger predicted all the opposition strategies considered, both ingroup-directed (support for confrontation of ingroup members responsible for past war conditions in Iraq and support for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq) and outgroup-directed (support for compensation for the victims). When the level of threat to the ingroup's image was experimentally increased, collective shame predicted support for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Furthermore, when the three emotions were taken into account together, guilt did not significantly predict any opposition strategy. However, it is relevant to note that these findings concerned an ongoing conflict where the ingroup's violence and misdeeds were still particularly salient in people's perception. To our knowledge, no studies have examined the simultaneous effects of these three emotions in response to an ingroup's historical misdeeds.

Here, we propose that the effects of collective guilt might turn out to be significant when historical misdeeds are salient, even when controlled for collective shame and ingroup-focused anger. Compared to shame and anger, guilt is characterized by a conscious and articulate appraisal of wrongdoing (Branscombe and Doosje 2004) that might require a longer time to be consolidated into individuals' minds. Therefore, in the present study, we expected collective guilt to be related to a pro-social behavioral intention,

namely, helping immigrants from Italian ex-colonies. In line with Brown and Čehajić's work (2008), we also hypothesized that this relationship could be mediated by feelings of empathy toward the outgroup.

Conversely, we expected collective shame to be related only to economic compensation of the ex-colonies. This is one of the primary means whereby colonial countries have acknowledged their historical misdeeds, so this strategy should be perceived as effective for restoring a positive public image of Italy. We also hypothesized that the perception of damage to the ingroup's image could mediate the relationship between collective shame and economic compensation.<sup>1</sup> We predicted that less "disclosed" strategies, on the other hand, such as helping the victims' descendants now living in Italy, would not necessarily be related to the shame experience. Finally, we expected that given its high action potential, ingroup-focused anger could directly predict both reparation strategies: economic compensation for the victims' descendants living in the ex-colonies and aid to immigrants from the Italian ex-colonies.

In order to test the aforementioned relationships and, at the same time, to empirically ascertain the non-significance of alternative paths, we tested a structural model with four levels of variables (see Figure 1). At the first level, the predictors were the appraisals arising from the simple evocation of the historical event of Italian colonialism: (a) acknowledgment of violence and damage caused by the Italian ingroup; (b) general evaluation of colonialism. Both these cognitive variables were hypothesized to trigger the three considered emotions (level 2). Collective emotions, in turn, were hypothesized to affect the outcome variables through their effects on two mediators: (a) ingroup's damaged reputation; (b) empathy felt toward the outgroup (level 3). At the fourth level were the outcome variables, namely, the two reparation strategies: (a) economic compensation for the

<sup>1</sup> The direction of causation between emotions and perceptions is still in debate. Some authors argue that emotional states affect perceptions and cognitions in ways that influence decision-making (Baumeister, Arndt, and Tice 2006), whereas the appraisal theory approach proposes that emotions are elicited by appraisals and

evaluations (Smith and Lazarus 1990). Perhaps the empirical relationship is recursive. Here, we specifically hypothesized that perception (acknowledging the violence) leads to emotion (collective shame), which in turn leads to another perception (of damage to the ingroup's image), which finally leads to intentions of reparation.

ex-colonies; (b) aid to immigrants from the ex-colonies now living in Italy.

The role of national ingroup identification was also taken into consideration. So far, this variable has been analyzed only in connection with collective guilt (for a review see Branscombe et al. 2004). These studies, however, reveal conflicting results: national ingroup identification was sometimes positively correlated with guilt (Doosje et al. 2004), sometimes negatively (Doosje et al. 1998), and sometimes not at all (Branscombe et al. 2004). In spite of these inconsistencies, we felt that ingroup identification still remained a variable whose effects should be considered when dealing with historical events involving the ingroup, particularly if such events are characterized by violence (Moshman argues that genocide is the product of “normal identity processes,” [2007, 115]). Therefore, when testing the effects hypothesized in our structural model, we took into account the possible contribution of ingroup identification.

### 3.1. Method

#### 3.1.1. Participants

One hundred and fifty-two Italian citizens (68 males and 84 females; mean age = 29.52, SD = 11.44; range: 16–62) participated voluntarily. The sample included 68 undergraduate students from the University of Milan-Bicocca (mean age = 22.25, SD = 4.71), and 84 non-students recruited through newsgroups and notices published on internet bulletin boards (mean age = 35.56, SD = 11.88).

*Procedure.* The internet survey entitled “Memories of historical national events” used an online questionnaire programmed in PHP and a MySQL database to manage the data collection. The participants’ level of identification was assessed one week before the beginning of the survey. In the main session, the respondents were asked to read a brief paragraph containing a neutral description of Italian colonialism before answering the questionnaire:

We are conducting research on memories of important historical events concerning our country. The conquest of the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea) and Libya that led to the establishment of an Italian colonial empire is an episode of our history that deeply influenced generations of people during the first half of the twentieth century. The aim of the present survey is to investigate collective representations concerning the role played by Italians during the colonial period. Please remember

that there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in the memories, images, and beliefs that you connect with this aspect of Italian history, and the attitude that you have toward it.

A map of Africa highlighting the former Italian colonies was displayed on the left of the introductory page quoted above.

#### 3.1.2. Measures

*Ingroup identification.* Identification was measured using an eight-item shortened form of a scale developed by Capozza, Brown, Aharpour, and Falvo (2006), with items such as: “I positively evaluate being an Italian”; “I feel similar to the other Italians.” The higher the score on the seven-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*, the stronger the identification ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

#### *Cognitive appraisals*

*Acknowledgment of the ingroup’s violence and damage* was assessed with two items: “During the colonial period, Italians committed collective violence against colonized populations”; “The colonial experience has led to a worsening of living conditions for the colonized populations.” Answers were given on a seven-point scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 7 = *totally agree*) that showed satisfactory internal reliability ( $\alpha = .62$ ).

*The evaluation of colonialism* was measured with five items of semantic differential (*undesirable/desirable*; *bad/good*; *inhumane/humane*; *unpleasant/pleasant*; *worthless/valuable*). On the seven-point scale, 1 was assigned to the negative pole and 7 to the positive, with 4 indicating the neutral point; thus higher scores indicated more positive evaluations ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

#### *Emotions*

*Collective guilt* was assessed using four items. Three of them were adapted from previous studies (Brown and Čehajić 2008; Brown et al. 2008): “Even if I have done nothing bad, I feel guilty for the behavior of Italians toward Africans during the colonial period”; “When I think about what Italians have done to Africans, I feel guilty”; “I feel guilty about the human rights violations committed by Italians during the colonial period.” The fourth item was developed by the authors: “Thinking about how we, as Italians, have discriminated Africans through racial laws makes me feel guilty.”

A seven-point scale was used (1 = *totally disagree*; 7 = *totally agree*;  $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Collective shame* was assessed using four items adapted from Brown et al. (2008) and Gausel et al. (2009): “As an Italian, I feel disgraced when I think about what we have done to the Africans”; “As an Italian, I feel humiliated when I think about what has happened to Africans”; “I feel ashamed when I think about how we Italians have behaved towards Africans”; “When I think about how Italians are seen by other countries because of the way they treated Africans, I feel ashamed.” Answers were given on a seven-point scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 7 = *totally agree*) with very good reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

*Ingroup-focused anger*. Participants were asked to rate how “furious,” “angry,” or “incensed” they felt when thinking about Italian colonialism (see Iyer et al. 2007), on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*). Reliability was very satisfactory ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

#### *Mediators of emotions*

*Empathy*. A four-item scale developed by Vezzali, Capozza, Mari, and Hichy (2007) was used, with items such as: “If you were to be in contact with people coming from Italian ex-colonies, to what extent do you feel that you would share their emotions?”; “If you were to be in contact with people coming from Italian ex-colonies, to what extent would you feel in tune with them?” Answers were given on a seven-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*), which showed very good internal reliability ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

*Ingroup’s damaged reputation* was assessed by adapting two items from Gausel et al. (2009): “I am concerned when I think that the Italians’ behavior toward Africans has created a bad image of Italy in the rest of the world”; “The racial laws issued in African colonies leave a permanent mark on the image of Italy in the world.” Participants answered on a seven-point scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 7 = *totally agree*). Reliability was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .67$ ).

#### *Reparation intentions*

*Economic compensation of the ex-colonies*. Two items were used: “Imagine you have the chance to allocate 100 million euros for building health facilities [Item 1] [or educational facilities, Item 2] in developing countries. How much would you give to the Italian ex-colonies and how much to the other developing countries?” Participants were asked to divide the entire amount, and the amount of money allocated to the ex-colonies was treated as a variable ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

*Aid to immigrants from the ex-colonies*. The first of the two items related to work: “Imagine that you are the owner of a company and have to hire new employees. All the applicants have equivalent skills and competence for the job. To what extent would you be willing to employ an immigrant coming from an ex-colony?” The second item related to education: “Imagine that you have to allocate funds to undergraduate student associations. To what extent would you be willing to allocate funds to an undergraduate student association of immigrants coming from ex-colonies?” A seven-point scale was used (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*;  $\alpha = .77$ ).

### 3.2. Results

#### 3.2.1. Preliminary Analyses

A series of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) with LISREL (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2006) were run first to test the adequacy of the measurement models relative to the four levels of variables (cognitive appraisals, collective emotions, mediators of emotions, reparation strategies; see Figure 1). In all cases, no error terms were allowed to correlate and associations were specified between the hypothesized factors. To evaluate the models’ goodness of fit, we use the prevailing indexes described in the literature (see e.g., Hu and Bentler 1999).<sup>2</sup>

We first considered the two cognitive appraisal scales (level 1). We tested a two-factor model where each item was allowed to load only on its designated factor: two items on the

<sup>2</sup> For each model we evaluated the general goodness of fit with a range of indexes. Firstly, we considered the chi-square. A satisfactory fit has been obtained when the chi-square is non-significant. However, since it is particularly sensitive to sample size (Bagozzi and Baumgartner 1994; Bentler 1990), we also assessed the Comparative

Fit Index (CFI) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Satisfactory model fits are obtained when CFI is greater than or equal to .95, and when SRMR is less than or equal to .08 (Hu and Bentler 1999; for discussion, see also Marsh, Balla, and Hau 1996). Additionally, we assessed the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC;

Akaike 1987). AIC indicates a better fit when it is smaller. For two models using same data set, the model with the smaller AIC is to be preferred.



factor of acknowledgment of violence and damage committed by the ingroup, and five items on the general evaluation of colonialism. We then ran an alternative model with one undifferentiated appraisal factor. The fit indexes revealed that the two-factor model fitted the data better than the alternative one (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the standardized fac-

tor loadings from the hypothesized model confirmed that each factor was well defined by its items. The correlation between the two latent factors of appraisal was strong ( $\phi = .84$ ), but did not include the perfect correlation ( $SE = .03$ ,  $p = .05$ ).<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Confirmatory factor analyses: Fit indexes and model comparisons**

|                              | Fit indexes |      |            |     |      |        |
|------------------------------|-------------|------|------------|-----|------|--------|
|                              | $\chi^2$    | $df$ | $p \equiv$ | CFI | SRMR | AIC    |
| <i>Cognitive appraisals</i>  |             |      |            |     |      |        |
| Two-factor model             | 26.12       | 13   | .02        | .99 | .029 | 55.81  |
| One-factor model             | 30.15       | 14   | .01        | .97 | .035 | 58.26  |
| <i>Collective emotions</i>   |             |      |            |     |      |        |
| Three-factor model           | 112.82      | 41   | .00        | .97 | .056 | 164.76 |
| Two-factor model             | 268.16      | 43   | .00        | .91 | .096 | 309.71 |
| One-factor model             | 429.77      | 44   | .00        | .85 | .12  | 471.56 |
| <i>Mediators of emotions</i> |             |      |            |     |      |        |
| Two-factor model             | 18.36       | 8    | .02        | .98 | .028 | 45.91  |
| One-factor model             | 55.46       | 9    | .00        | .91 | .11  | 77.26  |
| <i>Reparation strategies</i> |             |      |            |     |      |        |
| Two-factor model             | 3.51        | 2    | .17        | .99 | .049 | 19.46  |
| One-factor model             | 214.44      | 3    | .01        | .01 | .26  | 129.68 |

Note: In the two-factor model items of collective guilt and shame were allowed to load on a single factor, while the items of anger loaded on a separate factor. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; SMRS = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; AIC = Akaike Information Criterion.

We then assessed the latent structure underlying collective emotions (level 2, see Figure 1). Our aim here was to use a stringent test to demonstrate that collective guilt and shame are distinct constructs, and not synonymous as conceived in some previous research (e.g., Iyer et al. 2003; Leach et al. 2006). We tested a three-factor model where each item was allowed to load only on its respective factor (i.e., guilt, shame, and anger). An alternative two-factor model was also run, in which the observed variables of guilt and shame were loaded on the same factor, whereas anger

was still considered as a separate construct. As illustrated in Table 1, the three-factor model performed much better than the two-factor one. The three latent constructs correlated positively with each other: the highest correlation was obtained between guilt and shame ( $\phi = .81$ ), although still significantly lower than the perfect correlation ( $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .05$ ; i.e., discriminant validity). It is worth noting that the three-factor model also performed better than the one-factor model (see Table 1).

<sup>3</sup> In this specific case, it is worth noticing that in both tested models fit indexes reached the relevant level for CFI and SRMS, but in comparison between the two models the two-factor solution was more satisfactory. Factor loadings revealed that the two-factor model was empiri-

cally more adequate than the one-factor solution. Additionally, the two-factor model had a smaller AIC value, suggesting superior fit (Akaike 1987).

<sup>4</sup> The existence of a perfect correlation is verified by assessing the confidence interval, obtained by considering two standard errors above and two standard errors below the estimated correlation ( $p = .05$ ).

Moving on to consider the latent structure of mediators of emotions (level 3, see Figure 1), we assessed both a two-factor model and an alternative one-factor model: as expected, the former was better than the latter (Table 1). The correlation of latent factors (i.e., ingroup's damaged reputation and empathy) was significant but low ( $\varphi = .22$ ).

Finally, similar results were obtained when CFAs were performed on the variables at level 4, namely, reparation strategies. The two-factor model achieved better fit indexes than the one-factor model (see Table 1). The correlation of latent constructs (i.e., economic compensation for the country and aid to immigrants) was significant but quite low:  $\varphi = .30$ .

### 3.2.2. Descriptive Statistics

The items of each scale were averaged to form reliable composite scores. Means and standard deviations for student and non-student participants, and their mean differences, are presented in Table 2. Note first, that the two subsamples showed the same level of ingroup identification. Moreover, the participants in both subsamples recognized colonialism as a period characterized by violence against the population, and evaluated it very negatively.

**Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the constructs for the subsamples of students and non-students**

| Measures  | Student subsample<br>( <i>N</i> = 68) |           | Non-student sub-<br>sample ( <i>N</i> = 84) |           |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------|---|-----------|
|   | <i>M</i>                              | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                                    | <i>SD</i> |
| Ingroup identification                          | 3.84 <sub>a</sub>                     | 0.96      | 3.59 <sub>a</sub>                           | 1.15      |
| Acknowledgment of ingroup's violence and damage | 4.77 <sub>a</sub>                     | 0.99      | 4.76 <sub>a</sub>                           | 1.29      |
| Evaluation of colonialism                       | 2.84 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.08      | 2.65 <sub>a</sub>                           | 1.27      |
| Collective guilt                                | 3.86 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.48      | 3.23 <sub>b</sub>                           | 1.64      |
| Collective shame                                | 4.08 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.31      | 3.44 <sub>b</sub>                           | 1.55      |
| Ingroup-focused anger                           | 3.26 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.43      | 2.55 <sub>b</sub>                           | 1.44      |
| Damage to ingroup's reputation                  | 4.48 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.27      | 4.28 <sub>a</sub>                           | 1.50      |
| Empathy   | 4.37 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.12      | 3.88 <sub>b</sub>                           | 1.32      |
| Economic compensation for ex-colonies           | 43.89 <sub>a</sub>                    | 11.77     | 39.40 <sub>a</sub>                          | 20.57     |
| Aid to immigrants from ex-colonies              | 4.48 <sub>a</sub>                     | 1.38      | 4.30 <sub>a</sub>                           | 1.23      |

Note: Scale of economic compensation ranged from 1 to 100, all other scales ranged from 1 to 7. Different subscripts on the same row indicate that the means are significantly different (*t*-test),  $p < .05$ .

Concerning collective emotions (see Table 2), after the evocation of the historical event of colonialism, participants expressed guilt, shame, and ingroup-focused anger with moderate intensity (generally, the level expressed in other studies was lower, e.g., Iyer et al. 2007). Students displayed such emotions with a—slightly—significantly stronger intensity than non-students. A similar result was found for empathy, which was slightly higher for students. Finally, the perceptions of the ingroup's damaged reputation and intentions to provide economic compensation to the ex-colonies or aid to immigrants coming from those nations were not different between the two subsamples.

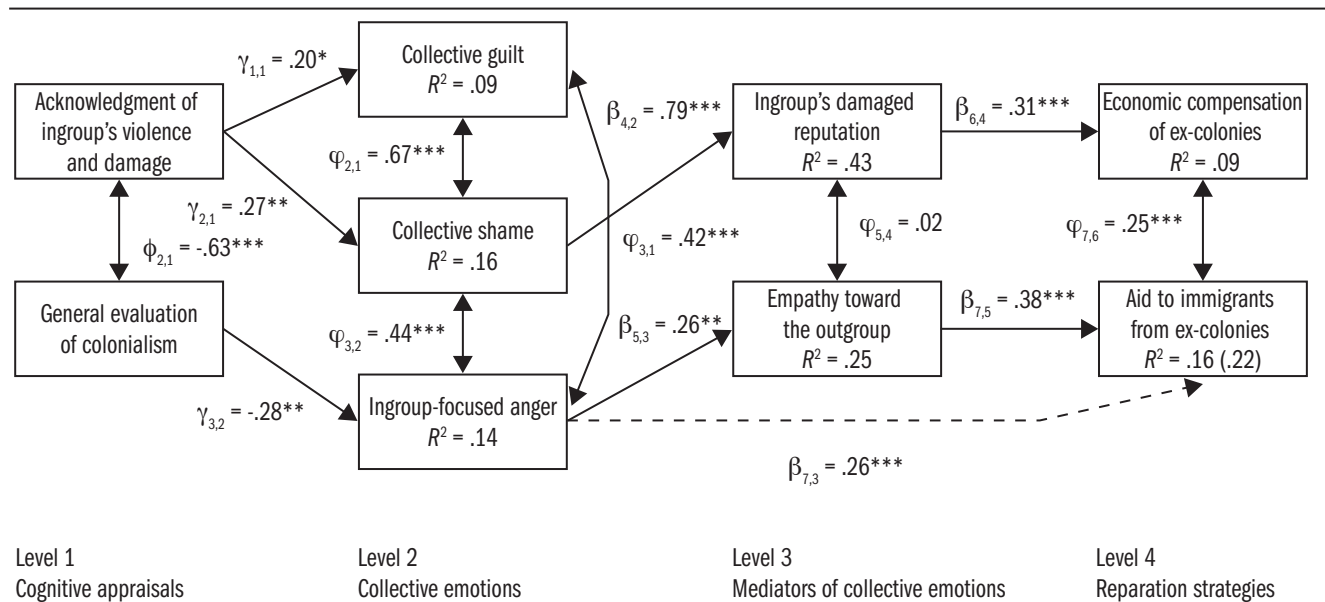
**Table 3: Means, standard deviations, and correlations between constructs of the total sample**

| Variables  | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      | 9     | 10   |
|--|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|------|
| 1. Ingroup identification                          | -      |         |         |        |        |        |        |        |       |      |
| 2. Acknowledgment of ingroup's violence and damage | -.22** | -       |         |        |        |        |        |        |       |      |
| 3. Evaluation of colonialism                       | .34*** | -.65*** | -       |        |        |        |        |        |       |      |
| 4. Collective guilt                                | .05    | .26**   | -.22**  | -      |        |        |        |        |       |      |
| 5. Collective shame                                | .06    | .36***  | -.30*** | .79*** | -      |        |        |        |       |      |
| 6. Ingroup-focused anger                           | -.25** | .34***  | -.42*** | .50*** | .55*** | -      |        |        |       |      |
| 7. Damage to ingroup's reputation                  | .05    | .32***  | -.26**  | .45*** | .65*** | .32*** | -      |        |       |      |
| 8. Empathy   | -.16*  | .10     | -.12    | .30*** | .28*** | .38*** | .19*   | -      |       |      |
| 9. Economic compensation for ex-colonies           | .24**  | -.05    | .04     | .16°   | .18*   | .06    | .30*** | -.02   | -     |      |
| 10. Aid to immigrants from ex-colonies'            | -.17*  | .17*    | -.28**  | .16°   | .18*   | .40*** | .14    | .41*** | .23** | -    |
| <i>M</i>   | 3.70   | 4.77    | 2.73    | 3.51   | 3.73   | 2.87   | 4.37   | 4.10   | 41.41 | 4.38 |
| <i>SD</i>  | 1.07   | 1.16    | 1.19    | 1.60   | 1.48   | 1.48   | 1.40   | 1.26   | 17.30 | 1.30 |

Note: Scale of economic compensation ranged from 1 to 100, all other scales ranged from 1 to 7.  
 ° $p < .055$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

The hypothesized structural model (see Figure 1) was tested using the whole sample data. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between all the variables are presented in Table 3. In the correlation matrix, it is worth noticing that identification did not correlate with collective guilt (compare Branscombe et al. 2004) or collective shame, but correlated negatively with ingroup-focused anger. Moreover, identification correlated with both reparation strategies—but positively with economic compensation and negatively with aid to immigrants.

Figure 1: Path analysis results for the structural model



### 3.2.3. Structural Model

Path analysis with LISREL (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1999) was used to test the proposed structural model (see Figure 1). The two cognitive predictors (level 1) were specified as exogenous variables predicting all of the three emotions (level 2); in turn, collective emotions were all specified as determinants of the ingroup's reputation as damaged and empathy toward the outgroup (level 3). Finally, these mediators were specified to influence the outcome variables of reparation (level 4).<sup>5</sup> Mediation effects were assessed following the approach of Taylor, MacKinnon, and Tein (2008).

Since we argued that ingroup identification could have some effects on the hypothesized paths, we performed such analysis by considering the partial correlations matrix as an input, controlling for its effects. Removing the statistical effects of identification is a simple but effective method to control the mutual dependencies without further compli-

cating the model by their direct inclusion (Marrelec et al. 2007; Preacher 2006).<sup>6</sup>

The model tested fitted the data extremely well:  $\chi^2(14) = 25.18, p = .033$ ; CFI = .98; SRMR = .05. The findings revealed that, as predicted, acknowledgment of the violence and damage caused by the ingroup led to both collective guilt and collective shame ( $\gamma = .20, p < .05$ , and  $\gamma = .27, p < .01$ , respectively), whereas the general evaluation of colonialism negatively influenced ingroup-focused anger ( $\gamma = -.28, p < .01$ ): the more negatively the participants evaluated colonialism, the angrier they felt toward Italians (see Figure 1).

Regarding the effects of emotions on their mediators (level 3), guilt influenced neither the ingroup's damaged reputation nor empathy; the latter result was contrary to our prediction. Nevertheless, consistent with previous studies (Branscombe et al. 2004; Lickel et al. 2004) and our

<sup>5</sup> In testing the model, we set free correlations between endogenous variables at level 2 (collective emotions), level 3 (the two mediators of emotions), and level 4 (reparation strategies).

<sup>6</sup> Using this method ensures that any significant relationship between two variables is a true relationship not depending on spurious correlation with the level of identification.

own predictions, the experience of shame led participants to perceive that the main consequence of their ingroup's misdeeds was damage to its reputation ( $\beta = .79, p < .001$ ).<sup>7</sup> Unexpectedly, ingroup-focused anger was positively related to empathy toward the outgroup ( $\beta = .26, p < .01$ ).

Our hypotheses concerning reparation strategies were partially supported. The perception of a damaged national reputation did indeed determine only the intention to compensate the present population of the ex-colonies in economic terms ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ), whereas empathy affected only the intention to aid immigrants coming from those same countries ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ).

Because the findings showed a pattern of double mediation between certain variables, we checked for the significance of the indirect effects. The influence of acknowledgment of violence on support for economic compensation for the ex-colonies (indirect effect:  $.05, p < .05$ ) was mediated by collective shame and ingroup's damaged reputation (indirect effect of acknowledgment of violence on ingroup's damage reputation:  $.18, p < .01$ ; indirect effect of collective shame on support for economic compensation for ex-colonies:  $.24, p < .001$ ). The negative effect of evaluation of colonialism on support for aid to immigrants from the ex-colonies (indirect effect:  $-.04, p < .05$ ) was mediated by ingroup-focused anger and empathy toward the outgroup (indirect effect of evaluation of colonialism on empathy:  $-.10, p < .05$ ; indirect effect of anger on support for aid to immigrants from the ex-colonies:  $.10, p < .05$ ).

The portion of explained variance accounted for by the model was quite moderate for collective emotions (guilt 9 percent, shame 16 percent, anger 14 percent), good for mediators of emotions (damaged reputation 43 percent, empathy 25 percent), and modest for reparation intentions (toward ex-colonies 9 percent, toward immigrants 16 percent).

Afterwards, we tested the presence of residual direct effects: (a) of the antecedents on mediators of emotions and outcome variables (level 3 and 4); (b) of emotions on outcome variables. Such hypotheses were investigated by testing a series of nested models with LISREL. The models including each direct path were compared to the baseline double-mediation model (see Figure 1). Chi-square difference tests were computed to check for significance of these direct paths. A non-significant chi-square difference indicates a full mediation is obtained, while a significant direct path indicates a partial mediation (Kline 1998). The findings revealed no significant residual direct effects, with the single exception of the positive direct effect of ingroup-focused anger on support for the reparation strategy of helping immigrants from the ex-colonies:  $\beta = .26, p < .001$  ( $\chi^2_d[1] = 11.17, p < .001$ ). By adding this path, the portion of variance in intentions to aid immigrants accounted for increased to  $.22$ . Therefore, the effect of anger was only partially mediated by empathy and this result confirmed the "high action potential" nature of this emotion.

To briefly recap our findings concerning the double mediation: (a) collective emotions totally mediated the effects of cognitive appraisals on the hypothesized variables, except for collective guilt, whose effects were absorbed by the intercorrelation with collective shame; (b) the ingroup's damaged reputation totally mediated the effect of shame on the economic compensation of ex-colonies; (c) empathy partially mediated the effect of ingroup-focused anger on the reparation intention of aiding immigrants from ex-colonies.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Discussion

By testing a double mediation structural model, the present study provides preliminary empirical evidence concerning the perception and conceptualization of the Italian colonial experience. As described above, the collective memory of this period has been biased by censorship and a general

<sup>7</sup> An alternative model with the relationship between collective shame and ingroup's damaged reputation reversed was also tested. The model did not fit the data at all:  $\chi^2(19) = 90.97, p = .00; CFI = .88; SRMR = .16$ .

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that we obtained the same significant paths when we considered the correlation matrix non-partialized for the effect of identification (i.e., the zero-order correlation) as an input. However, some effects of multicollinearity became evident.



delay in historical investigation. The present work set out to investigate how modern Italians see colonialism. Despite a tendency to spread an image of Italians as “humane colonizers” (Del Boca 2005; Labanca 2004; Volpato 2009), our results reveal a negative appraisal of these events and acknowledgement of the violence and damage perpetrated on the colonized populations, at least at an explicit level of evaluation. This was consistent for both students and non-students, regardless of age.

Those negative evaluations led to feelings of collective guilt, collective shame, and ingroup-focused anger. Interestingly, a concise and neutral evocation of colonialism proved to be effective in arousing collective emotions. Indeed, although still below the scale mid-points ( $ps < .05$ ;  $t$ -test), their means were generally higher than those found in previous studies (e.g., Iyer et al. 2007). In line with intergroup emotion theory (Mackie et al. 2000; Mackie et al. 2004; Smith 1993), participants experienced such emotions even if they were not directly involved in these events in their ingroup’s history. These collective emotions seem to have an important effect on the current relationship between Italians and victims’ descendants. As expected, this impact differed according to the collective emotion considered.

We hypothesized that collective guilt might positively predict a reparation intention aimed at helping immigrants coming from the ex-colonies. Unexpectedly, the findings show that this emotion had no influence when the effects of “higher action potential” emotions, such as shame and ingroup-focused anger, were taken into account. Although this finding is consistent with the work of Iyer and colleagues (2007), it contradicts our hypothesis. We would suggest that this result might depend on the “action-oriented” reparation strategies considered here. In fact, some studies show the effects of guilt limited to abstract reparation strategies (Allpress et al. forthcoming; Iyer et al. 2007; Leach et al. 2006). Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, compared to other emotions, guilt demands a more conscious treatment to significantly affect positive behaviors. Thus, despite the mean scores of guilt found in our sample, we suggest that collective guilt probably did not function as expected because there has never been a public debate on Italian colonialism. Indeed, Italian colonialism is still protected by the

self-absolving myth of “Italians good people” (Andrighetto et al. forthcoming; Volpato et al. 2007), which does not help Italians to internalize a constructive feeling of guilt. To assess whether our finding is due to the lack of a public debate or just to the “passive” nature of collective guilt, further research is needed. For instance, it would be appropriate to consider a historical event that draws more public attention than colonialism. Moreover, since this is a correlational study, future research manipulating the presentation of Italian colonialism is needed.

Given the “ingroup-centered” nature of shame (Brown and Čehajić 2008; Gausel et al. 2009; Iyer et al. 2003), we hypothesized that this emotion was related to behavioral intentions focusing on protecting and restoring the Italian public image in the eyes of other nations. The results support the hypothesis: collective shame positively predicted this reparation strategy through a total mediation of the perception that the ingroup’s image was damaged. Thus, in our opinion, collective shame predicted a reparation strategy which could elevate Italy on the same level as those countries that have already acknowledged their colonial misdeeds.

However, we believe that the most relevant result concerns the third collective emotion considered, namely, ingroup-focused anger. Contrary to our hypothesis, this emotion predicted one reparation strategy only: the intention to aid immigrants from the ex-colonies. Surprisingly, this relationship was partially mediated by empathy felt for the outgroup. Such findings show that experiencing anger toward the ingroup promotes empathetic feelings toward the outgroup, even for historical events and for outgroup members that are not direct victims of the ingroup’s past violence. Therefore, it seems that the anger arising from the oppression and unfairness exerted by the ingroup in the past produces empathy toward those who are oppressed today. Although further investigations are needed, we may speculate on the pattern found here: the perception of the ingroup’s misdeeds might trigger “empathic anger” (Batson et al. 2007; Dovidio et al. 2004); this could lead individuals to distance themselves from the ingroup and feel empathically closer to the victims, especially to those they may come into contact with (i.e., immigrants).

Although these results seem promising, it should be noted that the present work captured just one aspect of ingroup-focused anger, since we only considered reparation strategies focused on the outgroup. This emotion could also be a reliable predictor of “ingroup-directed” behavioral intentions, such as the intentions to reveal the ingroup members responsible for the misdeeds (Leach et al. 2007). Future works should address this issue by considering ingroup-directed compensatory strategies and identifying possible mediators of their relation with anger.

Finally, after removing the statistical effects of national identification, it seems that the paths found in the present study work independently of group identity. So far, the literature on collective emotions and identification does not present conclusive results (e.g., Branscombe et al. 2004). However, the opposing correlations we found between identification and the two types of reparation strategy suggest intriguing indications to better understand the impact of identification on collective emotions and their outcomes. Therefore, future research should address this theoretical issue by directly including identification in the structural model.

To conclude, this study provides further evidence of the great potential inherent in collective emotions for improving intergroup relations spoiled by violence and injustice. Moreover, our results suggest the importance of considering guilt, shame and ingroup-focused anger simultaneously, since their interplay deeply affects the impact on outcome variables. It should be noted, however, that the variance of outcome variables explained by our model is quite modest. Future research is needed to detect additional predictors that may help to account for the unexplained variance.

In the light of the above findings, we argue that to develop constructive feelings of guilt and shame the Italian government and educational institutions should make greater efforts to face this subject, pointing out the physical, ethical, and moral violations perpetrated by Italians during the colonial period. As a nation, a deeper reflection on Italian wrongdoings toward the colonized populations is needed. To quote Del Boca (*Corriere della Sera*, November 22, 1997): “We should have the courage to overthrow this false question of honor. . . . We have to accept the risk of causing a shock to those who have always fostered the stereotype of our colonial adventure as ‘different’ from others, admitting our shame and giving back the truth to ex-colonies that are still waiting for moral compensation.”

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**Silvia Mari**  
 silvia.mari@unimib.it

**Luca Andrighetto**  
 luca.andrighetto@unimib.it

**Alessandro Gabbiadini**  
 ale.gabbiadini@gmail.it

**Federica Durante**  
 federica.durante@unimib.it

**Chiara Volpato**  
 chiara.volpato@unimib.it